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The Duty of Repentance, and Conversion to God, enforced.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED

AT THE NEW JERUSALEM TEMPLE,

CROSS-STREET, HATTON-GARDEN,

On the 10th and 17th of August, 1800,

From Isaiah, ch. i. 16, 17.

Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil. Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

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SERMON I.

ON THE DUTY OF REPENTANCE.

Isa. i. 16.

Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil.

THAT man ought to perform the duty of repentance, is a truth too evidently inculcated in the sacred Scriptures to be controverted by any one who has any reverence for that divine composition.

The reasonableness of the duty arises from the state of our fallen nature; man does not, nor is it to be expected that by nature he ever will, stand in the uprightness and integrity

wherein he originally stood, as he first came forth from the hands of the great Creator; for then, upon a review of the works which the Lord had made, more especially of man, the grand masterpiece of the whole, he saw and proclaimed all to be very good.

That human nature did not continue in that pure and happy state, we have the unerring and faithful testimony of the Lord himself, in his holy Word.

It is too much for our present purpose to enter into the particulars of the fall; suffice it to say, that it consisted in a gradual declension of the human race from the Lord—from the making him the all in all of love and wisdom, goodness and truth, until man not only imputed all within him to himself, but sunk into infernal states of evil and falsehood, altogether opposite to those heavenly and pure states in which he was originally created, therefore we are informed in Genesis, ch. iv. 5. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart*

heart was only evil continually. Verse 11. *The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence, and God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.* Similar declarations we also meet with in the book of Psalms, Ps. xiv. 1, &c. *The fool has said in his heart there is no God; corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity, there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one.* The same statement of the fact is given us in the beginning of this chapter, whence we have taken our text; the Lord, by his Prophet, in the 5th verse saying, *Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more, the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the feet even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.* Thus pronounces the record of divine truth concerning the fall of human nature, at the same time declaring all to

be involved therein, none excepted. With respect to the direful circumstances attending it, who, upon an appeal made to his own heart, will not subscribe in testification thereof? All who have seen the true picture of themselves, with respect to their fallen state; who have compared themselves with the unerring and pure laws of divine order given in the Word, will acknowledge, that by nature they are not only far from those heavenly and divine qualities which they were created to attain, but also that in them, of themselves, dwelleth no one thing that is good.

Thus, my dear friends, we have only to look into ourselves and see the real state wherein human nature stands in consequence of the fall; that we have lost the affection of heavenly and spiritual loves, with the understanding and perception of genuine truths which flow from, are the support of, and with them make one. That affections for selfish and worldly loves, and all manner of false principles, by nature, occupy the whole mind, whence every operation of our hands become polluted.

We cannot now go into the enquiry why the Lord, who is omnipotent, and whose love is equal to his power (man being the chief, nay the only darling of his heart) permitted the fall of man from the highest pinnacle of heaven to the lowest depths of hell; we are only now speaking concerning it as a certain fact, which has come to pass by Divine permission; we say by Divine permission, for without a Divine permission, or leave, no evil can take place. And because the darkness of the natural man is such, his conceptions of divine things so straitened, that he cannot distinguish between the Divine will absolute, and the Divine permission, or leave; therefore in the holy Word, evil, and the origin of evil, are attributed to the Lord; not that the case is so in reality, but so expressed for the sake of the appearance to the natural man, for whose use principally the Word, in the letter, is given; whilst the spiritual man discerns the real and genuine distinction between the different and contrary qualities attributed to the Lord, he knows that he is pure love in the very abstract, that he is good to all, and that his tender mercies are

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over all his works; that all other appearances of the Lord, either respecting his qualities or operations, arise from a perverted sight, occasioned by the fall.

Thus we draw a faithful view of our fallen estate, both from scripture and from experience. To enable us to rise from this low estate, from our own hell within our breasts to that heaven to which we and every human being were created to attain, was the holy Word first given, and for the same invaluable purpose is it still continued amongst us in this lower world, the Lord herein making such a display of the laws of divine order, that whoever *reads* may *run*. The precepts of life here laid down are within the capacity of every man who hears or reads them to perform, the Lord expecting no more of any man than according to the ability given, and wherein he graciously and mercifully upholds every moment, in continually in-flowing and gifting with life.

By reason of faith alone being considered as the all of religion, consequently the all of justi-

justification, sanctification, regeneration, and salvation, it has been taught by too many (whom we have reason to fear were more seeking themselves than the good of the flock) that the Lord has given forth precepts in the decalogue, and in many other parts of the Word, which he never designed his creatures to keep; yea farther, that when he gave them he knew they had no power to keep them. Because the creature could not keep them, therefore God sent his only beloved son into the world to fulfil the law in man's room and stead, which is effectual, according to some, for those whom he ordained to eternal salvation; or, according to others, for all those who in time shall act faith in his merits, thus impute to themselves, by faith, that which the Redeemer has done, as well as suffered.

But these fallacies, and many more appearances of truth heretofore taught in the Christian church at the time of her end, concerning faith alone, all vanish as fogs and mists before the glory of the rising sun, when that one eternal truth which this sacred book holds forth

forth in every page is fully assented unto, namely, that there is One Infinite Eternal Jehovah God, in whom is contained the Divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in person the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Creator from eternity, the Redeemer in time, and the Regenerator to eternity. When this eternal, sublime, angelic, and soul-reviving truth is fully assented unto from the light of the sacred Scriptures, the former dogmas mentioned will all be seen to proceed from the chimera of man's own intelligence. It will be seen that it was none other than Jehovah God himself, who descended into our world in the person of Jesus Christ, that his fulfilling of the law was in no respect in man's room and stead, but that it is as much now man's duty to adhere to the precepts of life therein given as before the Lord descended, agreeable to his own teaching in Matt. ch. v. 17, &c. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; whosoever shall break one of these my least commandments, and teach men so, the same shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but* WHOSOEVER

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SHALL DO *and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* Also in his reply to the young man, who enquired of him the way to eternal felicity, Matt. ch. xix. 17. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* How plain and manifest as the splendour of the sun-beams at noon day, to those who have eyes to see, and hearts disposed to imbibe truth for the sake of truth, that our Lord left the moral precepts of life—the eternal laws of Divine order, given in the Word of the Old Testament, as binding upon the human race as ever, in no wise disannulling them, abrogating nothing except the rituals of worship, and the ceremonial laws, which were given to the Jewish people, in order that they might be the representative of a church until the fulness of time came for Jehovah God himself to descend, and unite heaven with the earth, and all with himself, by the medium of the human in which he came, and which he fully glorified, that therein he might be the eternal mediator between the creature and his own essential Divine in himself.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this ceremonial law, peculiarly adapted to the Jewish dispensation, that the true Christian is no longer under, and without the deeds or observance of which the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is justified; but which passages appear to have been so grossly misrepresented (whether at first by design, or otherwise, is not so much our business to determine) as to be made the very foundation stone for raising a superstructure upon *faith alone*, whereby the practical attendance to the moral laws of life and salvation has been wholly overturned; those passages, at the same time, wherein the Apostle clearly inculcates the necessity of the observance of the moral law, being kept out of sight. How seldom do we hear the following quotation from the Apostle's Epistle to the Romans adduced, ch. iii. 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law;* whilst the declaration in verse 28 preceding, is being continually rehearsed—*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;* because this latter passage, by a misinterpretation, is made to favour the doctrine of

faith

faith alone justifying and saving. But how plain for any intelligent mind, from a comparison of these two passages with each other, to see, that by the deeds of the law without which the true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is justified, is meant the ceremonial law of the Jews, which our Lord abrogated, making them no part of the Christian œconomy and worship, and by the law which he wishes to establish, the law of life, the moral law of the ten commandments, the eternal transcript of the Divine mind written upon every man's heart, and every part of the holy Word explanatory of the same.

To suppose that the fountain of love and wisdom would give forth precepts to his creatures to observe, which he knew they were utterly incapable of fulfilling, fills the serious mind with shocking ideas, altogether repugnant to the nature of the Deity, and must tend to induce hard thoughts concerning him; but blessed be his holy name, this is not the truth of the case, he gathers not where he has not strawed, nor does he reap where he has not first sown, he requireth no more of his creature than accord-

ing to what he has, not according to what he has not. All the precepts of life are within our ability to perform; not indeed of ourselves, but from him in whom we live, move, and have our being, and without whom we can do nothing.

The first duty necessary to perform by man, after he is humbled, under a sight and perception of his evil state by nature, with the dire consequences that await his continuing in his evils, at the same time is truly desirous of deliverance from them—to become a renewed and regenerated man—conjoined to his Maker and associated in spirit with blessed angels above. The first duty necessary to perform in this case is, to supplicate the Lord for power against his evils; it being necessary to render our supplications effectual for this salutary purpose, that we immediately approach the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is the only God of heaven and earth (according to what has been before observed) and all power is in his hands. If this practice was more attended to, I am firmly persuaded we should soon find the desired help; no longer have to complain that our prayers are not regarded

garded at the throne of grace; we should ask and receive; seek and find; knock and it would be opened: until we receive from his Divine Human hand full deliverance from our evils.

We now proceed to open the particulars of the duty of repentance, as given forth from the Lord in the words of our text, *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil.* Which Divine precepts we will briefly illustrate in the order they lay, as a conclusion to our present discourse.

Wash ye—Hereby is meant that it becomes us to be found using the means to become purified from our evils and falses; what these means are, we may determine from the element used to wash with—namely, *water*, which in the spiritual sense of the holy Word corresponds to *truths*, more especially those exhibited to our view in the literal sense of the Word: for here is the fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse from sin and from uncleanness;—here are the

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waters wherein whoever steps after the angel has been down and troubled them, becomes clean and healed from every spiritual malady—Blessed be our Lord, in a spiritual point of view, Himself whom the angel represents, continually thus operates, and all who possess faith from love into him, from him continually experience it's sanative virtue.

The Lord in the gift of his holy Word has put the means of purification into every man's hand; which if he does not use, his condemnation is of himself.—*Washing* has particular allusion to the purification of our external man—to the putting away of outward evils, which respect our words and works; this man ought to do *as* of himself, that the act may be imputed unto him and become inscribed upon the book of his life, which will be opened in the other world, when he will be faithfully judged according to the things found written therein.

This first precept in our text, therefore, holds forth to us, the absolute necessity of putting the truths we know into practice; for this is not only

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the first step to reformation, but also whereby alone the Lord can flow forth from the centre of our souls, where he holds his more immediate seat, and animate, thus regenerate our whole frame from head to foot; but nothing can be done to the opening of heaven in the soul, except this duty of washing—the purification of our external man is entered upon *as* of ourselves, which in the book of the Revelation is called, opening of the door to the Lord, Rev. iii. 18; *Behold* (says the Lord), *I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him and he with me.*

Make you clean—After man has put away his outward evils, as sins against God, the next step he takes (provided he suffers himself to be led by the Lord's operations, upon his heart, in the influence of his holy spirit, and upon his understanding, from the holy Word) is, to become cleansed of the false notions and ideas which appertained to his natural man, but which now cannot be entertained longer by him, because deprived of their life and their essence. The

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numerous false ideas which appertain to the natural man, would be too much even for us to name, but the character and quality of them one and all, are to degrade the only God of heaven and earth, in the Divine Human person of Jehovah Jesus; and to lead those who embrace them to think lightly of evil, placing their chief dependence on faith alone. The cleansing herefrom can only be effected by using the means we have before noticed: To read the Word--to attend diligently the public worship of the Lord's house, where truth is faithfully dispensed and opened to our view, more especially in it's spiritual ground; as well as to have a special regard to the ordinancs which he has instituted, to be observed in his Church in all ages: Baptism and the holy Supper. The spiritual cleansing of the soul is not, nor can it be, an instantaneous work, and so we shall assuredly be convinced when we have a genuine sight of the depths of hell into which we have fallen, and the unclean state of our spiritual man.

Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.—As the former declaration related to the cleansing of the understanding from false ideas and notions, more especially concerning divine and spiritual things, so this latter has evident allusion to the will; for the will in man's natural state, is the recipient vessel of evil.

To fulfil this divine precept, it is necessary to examine into our hearts, searching out the ends and intentions of our will in what we do. Man may purify his outward part from many motives far from genuine: for instance, he may abstain from evils for worldly and selfish reasons, as the loss of wealth, health, reputation and life: and perhaps in our first setting out in religious ways, something of this sort was our chief inducement to enter into the road, for our ever merciful Lord leads us all, not only by our own fallacies, but also by our own sensualities, endeavouring, if possible to bend to himself. But when the understanding has become cleansed—when the genuine truths of heaven have been, in some measure at least, received, then the Lord leads on, to examine into the end and

 motive

motive for which evils were put away, and to *put away the evil of our doings*; for if evil actions are not put away from good motives, our apparent good works are evil, because we are only whited walls and painted sepulchres, full of rottenness within and dead men's bones.

We put away the evil of our doings from before the eyes of the Lord, when we consider, that evil in affection is the same before the Omniscient and Omnipresent God as evil in act; and that evils ought not to be done, because they are not only contrary to the love and light of heaven, but contrary to the mind of that pure Being whose eyes cannot behold iniquity or sin. Joseph thus put away evil from before the eyes of the Lord, when tempted by his mistress to commit the foul crime of adultery. *How*, says he, *shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God!* He does not in his reasoning with himself say, how shall I do this and dishonour my good name?—Injure and become ungrateful to my master, who has exalted me to high dignity in his house?—He does not reason concerning the sad consequences which may follow with

respect to himself. These things all appear beneath his elevated mind; his thoughts at once centre in his God, and he abstains from the evil from this motive, because it was sin against him. The manifestation of the love of his heart towards the Lord, was apparent by his fear to offend him; a fear which accompanies all true love.

Cease to do evil. Having once attained, by the strength of the Lord, the mastery over evil, we ought to continue therein to the end of our life; for whilst we are permitted to tarry here below, it is all the way through a state of probation: we are brought through this wilderness to try and prove the genuine nature of our love and faith; better never begin to walk in religion's ways than at last to go back, returning like a dog to his vomit; and like a sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

It is needful that the Christian be ever on his watch-tower, for the enemies of his soul are always going about like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour—that he continually

watch and pray, that he enter, that is, fall not, into the temptation. The promises are, *He that endureth to the end shall be saved; and be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Infernals are endeavouring to prejudice our spiritual life, in all manner of forms their cunning and malice can devise, but if we steadily keep our eye fixed on the Lord at all times, prefer the substantial things of an eternal state, to the fleeting things of time and sense, the Lord will give strength equal to the day—we shall not be ignorant of Satan's devices; we shall in our hearts and minds impute all evil to hell, whenever the risings thereof manifest themselves to our mind,—thus as the Lord's sheep shall never perish, neither shall any be able to pluck us out of his hands: he will most surely guide us by his counsel that afterwards his glory may receive us.

From these observations, on this part of the Word of our Lord, it may evidently appear wherein the Duty of Repentance genuinely consists; that it is of a more interior nature than many suppose; or as explained by those ministers

sters who preach up the delusive doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Notwithstanding what unskilful watchmen may declare, there is more required rightly to perform this duty, than professing or feeling a sorrow for sin; for this may be done by the vilest characters whilst under the dread of the punishment attendant. All of repentance arising from terror is of no avail, because done in a state of compulsion: hence we know, notwithstanding the profession of sorrow for their past lives, and the promise of amendment, which evil doers may make whilst the fear of punishment for their crimes hangs over their heads, let them be released, they are generally found to return to their old course of living; all their solemn vows made in their trouble, forgotten by them. Hence the danger of deferring the Duty of Repentance till we come to lay on a sick bed, for thereof can be little hope: Repentance to become available, must be performed in a state of liberty, as to our spiritual man, no external fears of any kind operating upon our mind; a duty, therefore, which ought not to be neglected by us a moment; and when performed thus in a state of

spiritual

spiritual freedom, it is done *as* of ourselves, though not absolutely of ourselves, but of the Lord; and what is done *as* of ourselves, becomes of our inner man,—of our love, and of our life, hence abideth through time into eternity: whilst all things done under compulsion, pass off from us, as if we had never known them, when the restraint is taken off: as in the case of death-bed repentance; the repentance then performed—the sorrow then expressed for past transactions, is under the fear of death, and the dread of meeting the judge of quick and dead, in that world where all the secrets of the heart are exposed; but when the person has actually passed through death, the fear of death necessarily subsides, the loves of the life then manifest themselves whence the affections of his will proceeded. And in those loves he remains for ever; the loves of the life within, make the heaven or hell without.

To become renewed, or regenerated, with respect to the loves of our life, a mere sorrowing for sin, which is the most that can take place on a death-bed, is in no wise sufficient—the evils

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of our natural man must actually be put away whilst we enjoy liberty of spirit. May we, therefore, my dear friends, determine, humbly supplicating the Divine aid to make the Word of counsel and command our daily practice, remembering, that the Lord *now* speaks unto us, from the love and compassion of his heart towards our feeble frame. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil.*

Now to our Lord Jesus Christ be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

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S. T. R.

SERMON II.

ON THE DUTY OF CONVERSION.

Isa. i. 17.

Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

THAT conversion is a distinct duty from the work of repentance, is in some measure known and acknowledged in the Christian church, inasmuch as the ministers therein, imitating the practice of the Apostles, often call upon their hearers to repent and be converted.

Much has been written and preached concerning conversion, it's nature, quality and effects on the mind, as well as repentance; but in consequence of the general darkness which

has overspread the Christian hemisphere, in these last days more especially, from the prevalence of the opinion that all spiritual gifts, graces, virtues and duties, centre in and flow from faith alone, the true and genuine nature neither of repentance or conversion have been opened to the rational mind, whereby the humble pious soul, the man simply enquiring concerning the Lord's will, for the sake of the salvation of his soul, is left in perplexing doubts and desponding fears, causing him to hang down his head like a bulrush, fearful lest the path wherein he walks is not the true road to eternal felicity.

Both repentance and conversion, as well as every other Christian grace and virtue, according to the interior ground of the subject, are of the Lord alone, for he says, *Without me ye can do nothing*. Still that man should both repent and convert *as* of himself, is a truth whence springs all the activity of the life of heaven in the soul. We say *as* of himself, because thus our gracious and all-wise Creator permits us to perceive his operations of love and mercy upon

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our hearts and souls, whilst we endeavour to exert the powers wherein we are momentarily upheld; without the possession of which we should not enjoy the human faculty, the image and likeness of the Divinity, wherein man was originally created.

The particular distinction between repentance and conversion is, that repentance consists in putting away our evils and falses, as well hereditary as actual; and conversion in doing of good and truth after evils are put away: the latter state succeeding the former. For as man, after supplication to the Lord, actually puts away his evils and falses, the Lord flows-in with goodness and truth; and in consequence of the Lord's gifts and graces being received in love, and reduced to practice in life, the man becomes a new creature, old things are passed away, and all things made new; in short, he becometh a converted man. This, and nothing less, is genuine conversion; and whoever among us are not arrived to that state, are deluded in flattering ourselves that we are turned to the Lord.

That genuine repentance consists in actual abstinence from evils, because they are sins, and genuine conversion in doing good *as* of ourselves, yet in heart ascribing all power, and giving all praise to the Lord, we may fully prove from our present text, taken in connection with the preceding verse (which we illustrated before you the last Sabbath-day morning) *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil. Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* The man who practices the duties here inculcated with respect to putting away of evils, he does the work of repentance; but would he advance in the spiritual and heavenly life, he must proceed on to conversion; the particular duties relating to which, as given from the Lord in our text, we will endeavour briefly to illustrate, for our present mutual edification, taking the various parts into consideration in the order in which they stand. *Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

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The first part of the duty of conversion which calls forth our serious attention is, *Learn to do well.* This declaration is put as the frontispiece of conversion, and immediately follows *Cease to do evil,* because man does not come into a fit frame to learn the things of a spiritual and heavenly nature, that make for the soul's everlasting welfare; nor does he savingly apply truths to life until he has faithfully performed the work of repentance. Do we enquire the reason? The answer is, because until man savingly puts away his evils, his understanding is full of all manner of falsities favouring those evils; and agreeable to the saying of Solomon, "A full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Further, man cannot savingly learn to do well, until he becomes cloathed with humility. Every man in his sins is full of the pride of his own intelligence, not willingly bending himself to the teachings of the holy Word; but in proportion as evils are put away, he sees the fallacy of trusting to self-derived intelligence; he sees that without Divine instruction he is altogether ignorant of the things of a spiritual life, and of those goods and truths which by reason of their

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flowing down from heaven, fit the humble receiver for, and actually elevate him to that happy abode, which will be the sure portion of all who receive truth from the Lord; and whatever we receive from the holy Word in a state of humility, we receive from the Lord; for the Lord teaches no man, nor any angel, that which is good and true, but by the medium of his Word: To that fountain it becomes us to apply our mind, and search for truth as for hid treasure, copying the example of the merchantman in our Lord's parable, *seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.* And let us rest assured, that if we search the holy Word from simple honest hearts—from upright disinterested motives, we shall find the Lord's declaration to that point fully accomplished in our experience, that whosoever asketh, receiveth; him that seeketh, findeth; to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. It cannot be otherwise, because every good and true desire in our bosom has it's origin from the Lord alone, and his love forbids to enkindle any desire which he will not fully satiate in his own good time.

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Another observation we may make upon this precept of true conversion to God, *Learn to do well*, is, that it is accomplished in nothing short of learning truths for the sake of life.

The Hebrew word here rendered *to do well*, means *to be good, to do good, and to cause to be good*, that is, *to endeavour to cause others to be good*. Herein we behold the first step of true and genuine conversion. It consists in learning truths, but not for the same end as before our evils were put away, for we then learnt truths for the sake of storing our minds with knowledges of various kinds. The truths in that case were exalted to no higher degree than our understanding principle, wherefore they were all scientifically received; but now they are learned for the sake of amending the heart, as well as enlightening the understanding; and that from an enlightened understanding, and a heart inflamed with heavenly and divine loves, the feet may walk the narrow path that leads to everlasting happiness; therefore agreeable to the true import of the word rendered *to do well*, the search after truth is made, that after we have become truly

informed

informed into what is good, the heart may love it, the hands may do it, and with a holy zeal regulated by prudence, we may endeavour to cause others to do the same, agreeable to our Lord's advice, *So let your light shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.* Every enlightened mind into what is good, is capable of teaching others to walk the same road; this he may and ought to do as well by example as precept.

The next command concerning true and genuine conversion given by the Lord in our text, is, *Seek judgment;* in unfolding of which it is necessary that we illustrate the meaning of the term judgment, in it's literal, and in it's spiritual ground.

Judgment, in the natural sense, means a condemnation of evil and falsehood, and a justification of goodness and truth.

That this is the natural sense of the term, may be evident from what is spoken concerning the judgment which every mortal must undergo,

dergo, after death, in the spiritual world; for then, agreeable to the holy Scriptures, every man will be rewarded according to his works, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil. Those who have become truly converted, and have their place at the right hand of the Judge, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his Divine Humanity, shall hear the blessed sentence pronounced upon them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world*; whilst the hardened and impenitent, having their portion on the Lord's left, shall hear their judgment pronounced, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

In the spiritual sense of the holy Word, *judgment* has reference to truths. It has reference hereto, inasmuch as all of judgment is executed by the Lord, from and according to truth. Judgment has this meaning in Psalm cxix. 108, where David praying to the Lord to vouchsafe him the knowledge of Divine truths, whereby he might be able to make a stand

against his enemies, cries out, *Accept the free-will offering of my mouth, and teach me thy judgments.* The judgments which he desired to be taught being Divine truths whence judgement is effected. It has the same meaning in the spiritual sense, in the following prayer, Psalm lxxii. 1. *Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.* Judgments here having respect to Divine truths, and righteousness to Divine good. The king and the king's son is the Lord in the human, whereby and wherein, agreeable to the Word of prophecy, he executed judgment and righteousness in the earth. Also Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20. *He sheweth his Word unto Jacob, his judgments unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments, they have not known them;* because the sacred Scriptures of Divine truth was only with the Israelitish nation.

Unless the term Judgment had some other sense than appears on the letter, there would be no propriety in the command to the soul willing to become genuinely converted to the Lord, to seek judgment; nor in the injunction laid down

down in many other parts of the Word, to keep judgment; but Divine truths, wherefrom is all power to pass judgment upon evil and falshood, and to justify goodness and truth, man may both seek and keep.

Applying this illustration of judgment personally to ourselves, we find that to seek judgement, means to esteem those truths, embrace them with affection, which mostly and indeed are altogether opposed to the evils and falses of our natural state, and which pass a judgment upon them,

The Lord, in the parable of the sower, points out the several grounds upon which the seed of Divine truths fall; one represented as *the stony, where it had not much earth, and forthwith it sprung up because they had no depth of earth; and when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away.* Our Lord expounding this part of the parable, informs us, *he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath he no root in himself, but*

dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the Word, by and by he is offended. The effect of genuine spiritual and heavenly truths upon the heart and mind, is, to pronounce a judgment upon the evils and falses of our natural man. Truth in the first place manifests our evils, in order that by repentance we may put them away. This work we can only perform as to our external; the purification of our internal is an after work, and only takes place as we seek judgment; that is, as our mind becomes enlightened into Divine truths, for therein we have power over all our internal spiritual enemies. True and genuine faith has always been esteemed of an omnipotent nature; it is therefore justly called the whole armour of God, the sword of the spirit, the shield of the Christian, the helmet of salvation. These are certainly the properties of faith, provided it is the faith of truth flowing from good; genuine faith being derived from no other source, therefore formed from the teaching of the holy Word, which is a display of Divine truths from the Lord to man. And if faith, which is derived from truth, has this effect, how much

much more truth itself; for in reality Divine truth is the fountain; faith, when rightly considered, being no more than a stream flowing therefrom.

Seeking for judgment, therefore, comes into fulness of effect, in the experience of the faithful, when by the Divine mercy the man is enabled to adjudge all evil in and with himself to hell, as the source whence it originated, and to ascribe all good to the Lord, the only fountain and flowing stream in and with all who receive, become, and do good.

But we now come to the three remaining words of counsel in our text, worthy our attention, do we desire truly to become converted to God. *Relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* We place these together, because, as must be evident to every attentive observer of the holy Word, they all allude to charity in act and exercise, thus to good works; works with man being either good or evil, as done from self, or done from the Lord. All works done by man before evils are put away by repentance as sins against God, are

evil

evil, however fair the outside appearance, inasmuch as they are done from man's selfhood, which is nothing but evil, therefore our Lord calls such who thus perform good works hypocritically, whited walls and painted sepulchres. All works done by man after evils are put away, are not done of man, but of the Lord in man, who now entereth into man's heart as into his own mansion; and although they are done, and cannot be otherwise performed by man than *as* of himself, nevertheless he believeth and acknowledgeth from the heart, that all is wholly of and from the Lord. It is necessary that man thus do good as well as believe truth *as* of himself, that as the Lord acts he may re-act from him, thus that conjunction may take place between the Lord and man, so that each party to the covenant may be in the fulness of their delights. The Lord on one part becoming conjoined to man by entering into his heart and taking up his abiding mansion therein, and man on the other becoming conjoined to the Lord by love and faith into him from him, wherein consists eternal life, with all it's concomitant blessednesses, joys and peace.

The

The operations of genuine charity, consists in *doing justice with judgment under the influence of the Lord the Saviour*. By *doing justice*, meaning from an affection of goodness; *with judgment*, conjoined to truth; hence with a warm heart and an enlightened understanding; *under the influence of the Lord the Saviour*, because in setting the Lord always before us, we ever desire and delight in doing that which may most redound to his glory and our neighbour's good.

Further, to perform acts of charity, it is highly expedient that we have a right knowledge who is our neighbour in the supreme degree, that there we may bestow the best of our services and talents. In the supreme sense the Lord himself is our neighbour; next rank his church, inasmuch as his church is his kingdom upon earth; then follows our country; then the society with whom we have thought proper to associate; lastly ourselves and those whom by blood and ties of relationship we may call ours.

When

When loves hold this position with man, the love of the Lord forming the head, and the love of self the feet, then man stands in the order of heaven. Whoever becomes truly repentant and converted to God, he stands in this order, and as he cannot express his love and gratitude to the Lord otherwise than in the members which form his mystical Divine Human body, herein he lays himself out to be as useful as his best abilities permit.

In the natural sense by *the oppressed, the fatherless and the widow,* are meant those who are literally so, and whoever fulfils the injunction given, from a feeling heart, does acts worthy of human praise; but this may be done where the principle of genuine charity does not inspire the breast; this may be done with those who have never repented of their evils, nor converted to the Lord, therefore works which can find no acceptance in the sight of God.

The oppressed, the fatherless, and *the widow* in the spiritual sense, relate to characters in the church, whose inward state correspond,

thus

thus are represented by those who are outwardly such in the world at large.

By the *oppressed* in the spiritual point of view, we understand such as are infested by evils and falsehoods; thus who are undergoing states of temptation from hell. Our Lord represents this state in the parable of the man who journeyed from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, whilst the priest and the Levites of the day, when they saw him, passed by on the other side; the Samaritan, influenced by a principle of charity to relieve *the oppressed*, came to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil. Our Lord at the conclusion of the parable, takes occasion to ask his disciples, whom they thought was the neighbour to him who fell among thieves? and being answered by them, the man who shewed mercy unto him, gives forth this word of Divine counsel, not only to them, but also to us, *Go thou and do likewise*. When the circumstances under which the charge is given are considered, it will appear to have the same

meaning as the direction in our text, to *relieve the oppressed,*

In states of spiritual oppression, the soul undergoing the same, has not the sight of genuine truth, he is induced to believe that all the infestations he feels within; the kindling up of his evil affections and false imaginations are all from himself; to relieve the oppressed therefore, is to endeavour to bring into the light of Divine truth; to teach that every evil and false that passes through the mind is from hell, and become not imputed, unless to those who willingly fall into them.

That the light of Divine truths makes free, our Lord himself teaches, saying, *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* That the allotment of evil to hell as it's originating source also makes free, is, because as man in thought and heart thus is enabled to do, the Lord delivers therefrom.

By *the fatherless* in the spiritual point of view, are meant those who are in truth

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and not in good, still desirous of possessing it. For a father in the spiritual sense of the word means good.

To *judge the fatherless*, therefore, is to lead those who are in the knowledge of truths into good; for truths without good, at the most amount to no more than faith alone: it is only religion in the head, which except it be also in the heart and life, will not be effectual to ensure our everlasting salvation. All truths lead to good, and will introduce the man into good who conscientiously leads his life according to that which he knows. In this point it becometh man to force himself, and as he practiseth truth, truth becomes elevated into his affections, where it is no longer to be called truth but good; Thus the fatherless is judged; for truth becometh good to the man who practises and loves it, and herein he finds a father; for the Lord as to Divine Good is the heavenly Father. Hence, says David, *A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.* The Lord is the general Father to all; but only the special Father in the

spiritual point of view, to those who receive the good of divine and heavenly love into their affections from him.

By *the widow*, whom we are counselled to relieve, is meant, the contrary state to the former, namely those who are in good but not in truth, still in the desire thereof. That this is the meaning of a widow is, because a *man* in the spiritual degree signifies truth, and a *woman* good: wherefore a woman in a widowed state means good without truth; this is the meaning in the spiritual degree.

In the celestial or superior degree, a widow means truth without good, because there the husband is good and the wife truth: therefore the Lord himself is called a husband and the church his bride, inasmuch as he is the only good, and she is the recipient of truth from him; but in the spiritual degree, as in our text, by *the widow* is meant, those who are in good but not in truth, therefore the widow is joined in series to the fatherless.

Those who are in good and not in truth, at best can be only in good of the natural kind—in good affections which do not become of a spiritual nature, thus saving to the man of the church, except united to truths, for truths from the Word exalt the quality of good from natural to spiritual. Hence to *plead for the widow* means, to endeavour to instruct in truths those who desire it, provided they live a good life, for the union of goodness and truth in the will and understanding of man is heaven itself; all heaven being formed of this union. Therefore *to judge the fatherless*, to endeavour to stir up those who know truths to good; *to plead for the widow*, to endeavour to lead those who are in good to truths, as well as *relieving of the oppressed*, pouring in the oil and the wine, soothing the distress and anguish which the afflicted and tempted spirit experiences, is introducing souls into heaven, by preparing them to enter upon that holy and happy state, which every inhabitant therein enjoys: hence are enumerated amongst the highest acts of charity which the faithful can

be

be engaged in, consequently marks and characters of true and genuine conversion to the Lord. Thus our Lord when he appeared to Paul, enjoined him when he was converted to strengthen his brethren.

Thus have we endeavoured briefly to illustrate the marks and evidences of genuine conversion to the Lord, as laid down in the words of our text: the Word of the Lord being so given that the wise may understand it in wisdom, and the simple in simplicity; every man being required to act according to his best understanding of the same. Whoever, from an affectionate heart, obeys the injunctions and counsels given in the letter of the Holy Word, qualifies himself to attain to the life of the spirit, whereby he becomes entitled after death to take his mansion amongst blessed angelic spirits who are in similar loves, and similar degrees of wisdom, whence one blissful scene of inexhaustable delight will open and expand to a boundless eternity, when the momentary labour we may have undergone here

here below, in practising the duties of repentance and conversion, will be indefinitely repaid.

Now to our Lord Jesus Christ be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

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